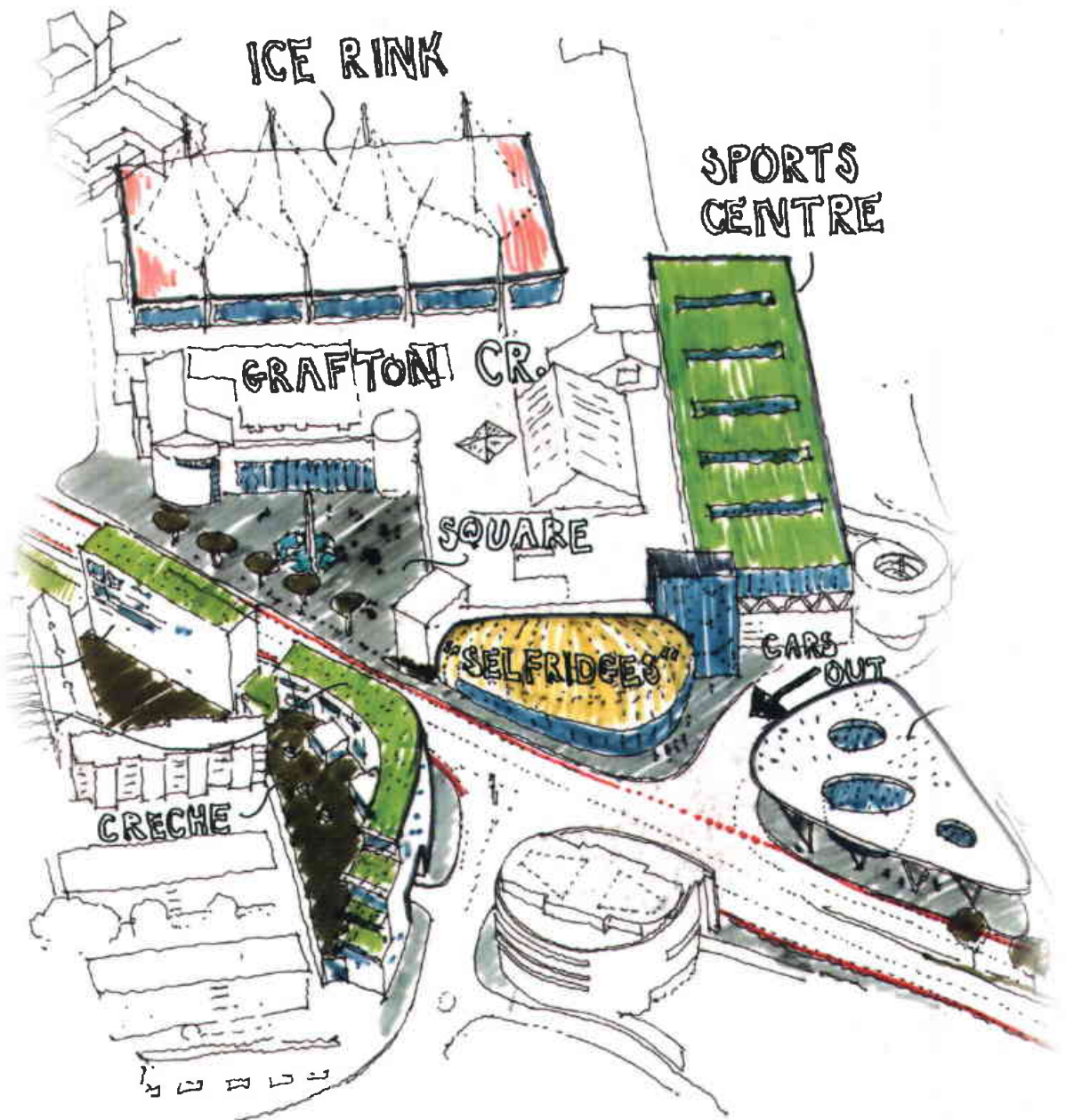




58

A better city

Twelve urban improvement ideas for Cambridge

plus

Leader on city planning

Why the sites were selected

How the schemes were evolved

What next for the City and County?

ca

THE EDITORS

IT TAKES THREE

Congestion charging and bus provision have dominated discussion at the Transport Infrastructure Fund (TIF) hearings. Much has been said about the implications of the proposed urban extensions and even more about the impact of buses on the historic centre. But, outside that centre, the impact of traffic growth on the city's public realm has attracted little comment.

So take a look at what clearly emerges as the dominant theme of this special issue on recent studies of twelve, mainly outer, city sites. Again and again, the question is how to reconcile the ever-increasing amount of bus traffic generated by city growth with the need for a pleasant public realm. More than ever, the separation of functions between City (responsible for general planning) and County (in charge of highway planning) seems utterly absurd.

Each scheme in this issue is the outcome of about five hours of debate and drawing. As a basis for discussion, each defines a challenge and suggests a possibility. It is that challenge which should now be addressed by others – and that possibility which should be considered and developed, perhaps in a very different way.

Demonstrating possibilities

The charrette format enables designers to demonstrate, very swiftly, such possibilities. We can have all the policies we can devise and all the workshops we can hold but, without the germinating power of design, our planning framework documents will be little more than a box-ticking exercise laced with good intentions. The recent study for the University-owned Old Press/Mill Lane area is a demonstration of this flawed method – undertaken without any preliminary design-based exploration of the possibilities for this distinctive city quarter.

At West and North West Cambridge and at Mill Lane, the older University now has a major part to play in city-making. Unsurprisingly, both results and outlook are so far disappointing. Making a city that works and is enjoyable – with city quarters that are both pleasant and profitable – is all part of the same challenge. It is surely time that the older University followed the City's example and appointed a design champion.

The City's wholehearted participation in the recent charrette is to be welcomed. Future progress will depend on joined-up thinking with the County and the University.

THE CHARRETTE ...

MAKING BETTER PLACES

What were 60 architects and colleagues up to in the Guildhall's Large Hall on 29 February? And why, in the construction professions' worst recession since 1939, were they working for nothing? CAA reports on the Cambridge Charrette.



Mole Architects start work on Newmarket Road

The third and largest charrette to take place in Cambridge, this was the first to be initiated by the Cambridge Association of Architects – supported, magnificently, by the City. The idea was to come up with proposals for enhancing fourteen rather run-down places in the city – the kinds of areas which, stuck between the developments in the station area and the urban extensions, no one seems to be thinking about (see pp. 4-5). Previous charrettes studied the station area (1993) and some allotments in the Kings Hedges area (1995), organised by the now defunct RIBA Architecture Centre on King's Parade and the Cambridge Urban Forum.

The only other UK city with a history of occasional charrettes is, unsurprisingly, London. Such events usually last a day and include a review by an invited individual or panel. The word, charrette, is French for a little cart. Its use in an architectural context is derived from the term *en charrette*, to define being in the process of rushing through a sketch design for a deadline. It originated at the École des Beaux Arts in Paris, where architecture students would rush their rolls of drawings from studio to review room in a little hand-cart.

Invitations were issued to every RIBA-member architect living in the Cambridge area. The respondents formed teams from practices based mainly in Cambridge but including one from the quiet Fenland hamlet of Prickwillow and another from bustling Stevenage. Some combined forces with local engineers and landscape architects and one included both a local developer, Aldo Marino, and Cambridge's celebrity city ranger and historian, Alan Brigham (see pp. 13-14). The Cambridge Preservation Society, present by invitation, fielded probably the most multi-disciplinary team of all.



The review in full swing in the Guildhall's Large Hall

On the appointed day, teams started setting up at 9.30 am. Eight pairs of long tables had been placed on either side of a central line of screens. Reserving their tables and laying out their drawing materials, the

teams collected site plans from the City Planning Department and collated these with their own on-site notes and photographs. Half-an-hour later, momentarily silencing the hall, CAA chair Adam Peavoy set the ball rolling.

There wasn't a computer in sight. This was the result of a deliberate decision and was almost certainly a great relief to those who spend their days facing a screen, generating production information for builders and answering emails from all and sundry. It's far easier to generate an idea with a quick sketch on paper than on a lap-top.

For the first three hours, bustle and debate filled the hall. One team of long-time partners was well away, preparing its final sketches well ahead of everyone else. In another, the invited engineer silently observed a stand-off between two architects before coolly stepping in with a solution to the issue in hand. Elsewhere, City planners were offering views on the issues involved and two most welcome County traffic engineers were giving advice on highway issues. Over in one corner of the hall, a ward councillor was persuading an extremely experienced team to consider an alternative planning strategy: they did just that – and produced one of the most interesting proposals of the day (see p. 11, top).

The planned one-hour lunch break was over in half that time. The hub-bub of conversation died as teams settled down to finalise their proposals in time to have them pinned-up on the screens by 4.00 pm.

London-based urban enabler and strategist, John Worthington, had been invited by the CAA to review the proposals. Arriving mid-afternoon and swiftly familiarising himself with the mass of material on offer, he began his review shortly after 4.00 pm. As the participants crowded around him, some standing on the tables for a view, he invited a spokesperson from the first team to quickly summarise its intentions and lead him through the drawings on the screen.



John Worthington, outsider with a critical view

A certain hilarity creeps into such proceedings as the apparent outrageousness of a proposal is exposed – to be followed, on occasion, by an almost stunned recognition of its brilliance. One example of this was the East Road scheme, featuring the development of a Ponte Vecchio-like row of stalls on the Elizabeth Way bridge and the creation of an ice rink on top of the Grafton Centre car park – alongside the humanizing of East Road itself.

The review finished shortly after 6.00, followed by a discussion between councillors, planners and participants, ably chaired by the indefatigable Worthington. One speaker recalled how, earlier in the day, a participant had said 'We must be crazy, giving away our time and ideas for free'. But many architects are like that – incapable of resisting a challenge, constantly identifying 'design' opportunities and living in hope that it may fall to them to bring them about to make, quite simply, better places.

It had been a successful day. Drinks followed – but not for long. The computer screens back at the office had to be attended to ... And, as they set off back to the office, it was that possibility of bringing some of the proposals to fruition that dominated the conversation.

... AND AFTER

COUNTY COLLABORATION NEEDED

It is the task of professionals to demonstrate possibilities to society – but it is society that has to decide which options to adopt. So what did local politicians and officers make of the charrette? And what might happen next? Peter Carolin reports.

'The charrette was both fun and inspiring', says the City's chief urban designer, Glen Richardson. 'Too often the reality of working in local government can tend to stifle creativity. The charrette was a way of stepping out of that – but in a realistic way, harnessing the experience and skill of local architects in developing solutions.' City director of planning, Simon Payne, is equally enthusiastic, describing the event as 'enormously exciting – with ideas not just from architects but from landscape architects, development control planners and others.'

Richardson points out that 'the challenge with most of the highway-based sites is to ensure that, as local highways authority, the County Council works together with the City to implement change at the scale proposed for places like East Road and Mitcham's Corner. 'We are going to have to explore this with them.' For Payne, too, this is the most important issue to emerge from the charrette. 'Most of the schemes rely on City and County working close together. We are already collaborating in the Joint Transport Forum – and much will depend on the outcome to the Transport Infrastructure Fund (TIF) debate. There's a 117% increase in bus use forecast. Our roads are going to come under even greater pressure as the city expands – this will have a significant impact on the public realm.'

The City has a £1.3 m fund for public realm improvements. But, with 88 schemes, it's primarily small scale work at neighbourhood level. There are simply not enough funds for the kind of strategically significant sites identified by the CAA (p. 4-5). 'To implement schemes of this kind,' says Payne, 'we need the County highways people alongside us. Together, we've got to develop our ideas for the city's middle and outer areas.'

There's a 117% increase in bus use forecast ... a significant impact on the public realm'

A day later, up at the Shire Hall's Castle End annexe, the County's head of transport policy and strategy, planner Paul Cook, and County strategic transport advisor, civil engineer Robert Tuckwell, are peering at the East Road and Mitcham's Corner schemes on my laptop. They, too, recognize the quality of the public realm as a major issue – but it's the impact on the buses that worries them. Domino theory seems to pervade their thinking – restrict or exclude the buses from one place and you create a problem in another ... and another.

They are already looking at East Road (p.6). 'Park and ride is going to become ever more important', asserts Cook. 'The existing East Road bus station serves four P & R sites and needs to double its size and improve its access – we're looking at an entry from Sun Street. If, as the charrette suggested, we reduce East Road to single carriage ways, it will be too narrow for the buses to swing out into the flow. That would create a traffic block on what is the city's inner ring road. We have looked at moving the ring road further out but it just increased the journey time, distance and pollution. Another advantage of the double carriage way is that it allows for queuing and right turns.'

Although dubious of the viability of the East Road scheme, Cook and Tuckwell were appreciative of the

suggestion to recreate the street frontages and densify the housing. The fact that they are already reviewing the bus station size and access – and considering substituting a traffic light intersection for the existing East/Newmarket Road roundabout – suggests that the moment is ripe for a fully integrated highway/public realm/housing study of this part of the city. East Road may yet become East Street.

"You've picked some of the most difficult junctions in the city – where will the traffic move to?"

Looking at Mitcham's Corner (p. 7), the issues are, for the County, brutally clear-cut. Victoria Road has already absorbed much of the former Bridge Street traffic and the Corner is on one of the guided bus routes. 'This proposal will savagely reduce traffic capacity,' claims Tuckwell, adding, 'traffic is going to increase with the urban extensions. We're not against making Mitcham's a pleasanter place but one either has to eliminate traffic or retain capacity. It's an issue we can't ignore.'

My time is nearly up – but, observing that we are actually sitting in a building earmarked for demolition in RH Partnership's Texaco Corner proposals (p. 9), I cannot resist opening their image on my laptop screen. As it appears, I add that, since Cambridge must become a unitary authority, the Shire Hall might be demolished – so a major performing arts centre has been proposed on its site. The two highway men take it in their stride before looking at the road layout and remarking, almost resignedly, 'It's the other end of Victoria Road. You've picked some of the most difficult junctions in the city – where will the traffic move to?'

If the City is all too aware that it can't deal with the major highway-related schemes on its own, it is more optimistic about Arbury Court (p. 8). 'We had already pin-pointed Arbury Court for work led by our urban design team', says Sian Reid, cabinet-member for growth and climate change. 'It needs attention and we are significant stakeholders in the place.' Payne confirms this and adds that officers are already at work on this and a similar neighbourhood centre in Wulfstan Way.

Rod Cantrill, the councillor most closely involved in decisions on the City's commercial property (and the possessor of a first degree in architecture) is similarly enthusiastic. In his view, 'the charrette provided an excellent platform for local architects to demonstrate how high quality creative designs can be applied to key sites around the city. As the City Council design champion, I am excited about developing some of the ideas presented in the exercise in conjunction with other parties.' But whether local architects will get a cut of the cake in the further development of any of the charrette schemes is a moot point. Public sector procurement rules are pretty restrictive and, in the eyes of many CAA members, favour size over quality. Payne, however, offers a crumb of hope, 'The city toilets competition might be a useful precedent – it worked well.'

"Whether local architects will get a cut of the cake in further development ... is a moot point"

For Simon Payne, the charrette 'was a very good way for architects to become involved in urban design. It was also good CPD for our planners – it helped them understand how architects put ideas together. I'd love to do another charrette and get the County more involved. In the meantime, we've got to identify which of the schemes might be progressed in conjunction with the TIF proposal.'



Bobby Open explains East Road ...



... where buses swing into outer lanes



AC Architects ponder Mitcham's ...



... with its marooned terrace houses



Vincent Goring get a grip on ...



... the length of Cherry Hinton Road

1. EAST ROAD

Cooper Open Prizeman Schröder
www.bobbyopen.com
Anthony Cooper
Bobby Open
Oriol Prizeman
Ingrid Schröder

2. MITCHAM'S CORNER

AC Architects
www.acarchitects.com
Anne Cooper
Jeremy Lodge

3. ARBURY COURT

5th Studio
www.5thstudio.co.uk
Oliver Smith
Kieran Perkins
February Phillips
Liz King
Sophie Roycroft
Mike Taylor
Jeremy Gay

4. HUNTINGDON ROAD

R H Partnership Architects
www.rhpartnership.co.uk
Andrew Drummond
David Emond
Tim Grove
Sabrina Pfeutzenreuter
Lesley Tubb
Eve Waldron Design
Eve Waldron
David Ashton
Jamie Buchanan, Landscape Architect
Jamie Buchanan

5. NEWMARKET ROAD

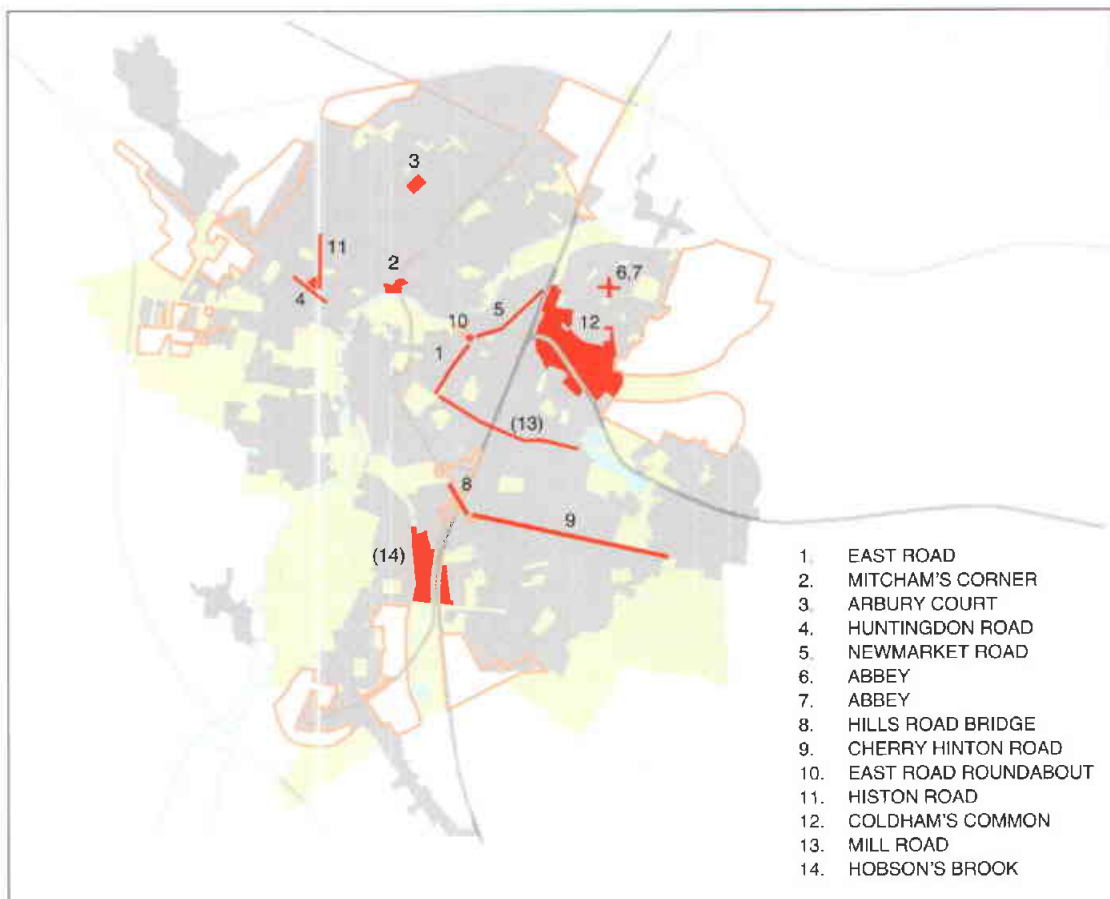
Mole Architects
www.molearchitects.co.uk
Meredith Bowles
Ian Bramwell
Hugo Keane
Helen Stratford
Magnus Gallie
Ramboll UK Ltd
Simon Smith
Barr Architects
Nathan Barr

6. ABBEY

RMJM Cambridge
www.rmjm.com
Collin Moses
Nick Cordingley
Ken Tani
Helene Kotter
Martin Lardner-Burke
The Landscape Partnership
Oliver Lee

7. ABBEY

Cambridge Preservation Society
www.cpswandlebury.org
David Taylor
Joyce Baird
Catherine Hall
Terry Gilbert
Carolyn Göhler



Locations of the fourteen sites (see pages 6–13). For reasons of space the Mill Lane and Hobson's Brook schemes are not illustrated

MENDING THE CITY

In this introduction to the schemes on the following pages, Oliver Smith and Kieran Perkins report on the origins of the Cambridge Association of Architects' charrette and the thinking behind the mission to put some 'dough' in the areas that lie between the 'crusty exterior' of urban extensions and the 'jam' at the centre of the city 'doughnut'.

The charrette marked the culmination of several years of talk. At the launch of the CAA's Michaelhouse exhibition back in 2005 the City's then recently appointed Director of Planning, Simon Payne, proposed that the Council and the city's architectural community should find a way of working together. It was a plea that he repeated when interviewed for *CAG* 52, adding 'there is a huge opportunity for architects to engage constructively with planners and elected members.' The Association was eager to respond but, because the arcane restrictions on procurement methods available to the City precluded more obvious and immediate forms of collaboration or commission, a plan for action took a number of years to evolve.

The charrette's slow gestation involved many conversations with the City officers and councillors and, crucially, within the CAA itself. Last year, as we planned the Expanding City issue of the gazette (*CAG* 57) we became acutely aware that, despite all the planning activity on the new extensions and the station area, the possibility for upgrading and 'mending' the existing city fabric was receiving little attention. The opportunity for a charrette was obvious – and the timing looked good. Once a course of action had been identified, both the members of the CAA and the City Council were enthusiastic and generous in their support and participation.

The issues

Despite the current downturn it is generally expected that Cambridge will grow significantly over the next 20 years. This growth will be primarily on the city's

northern, eastern and southern urban fringes* and in Northstowe. The scale and character of these developments is being addressed in the production and adoption of Development Briefs and Design Coding by City, District and County Planning Teams and Cambridgeshire Horizons, aided now by the newly-formed Joint Area Planning Team.

The historic city centre, the locus of the city's universities, as well as a recently expanded regional shopping centre and international tourist destination, is thriving. In planning terms, it is jealously protected by the multitude of listed buildings and settings, by almost complete Conservation Area coverage and by the City's conservation officers – as well as by a vigilant, well-informed and empowered local population.

Between the rich 'jam' of the city centre and the crispy 'coating' of new urban extensions on the periphery lies the 'dough' or middle ground of the city – its 20th century suburbs – where the majority of its current population live. Away from the limelight, these areas face challenges of their own as the city expands and as circumstances change. With the exception of the University-dominated western fringe, it is these areas – least protected by Conservation Area or listed status and the emergent policies of the fringe developments – that are perhaps most in need of revitalising as the city grows.

These 'in-between' areas face three kinds of threat: from traffic, as they become major transport corridors between the fringes and centre; from housing need, leading to redevelopment and/or subdivision for flats or student accommodation; and from opportunistic

development, as back-land and infill development dilutes precious green space.

The resources of the local and regional authorities – already stretched by the dual demands of centre and fringe – are struggling to pro-actively develop policies and briefs to manage the development of these areas in a sustainable and holistic manner. With this in mind, the CAA proposed a charrette to harness the talent, enthusiasm and local knowledge not only of its architect members but also of landscape architects, engineers and others. It knew that, to do this, it would need the support of the City's planning and urban design officers, collaborating with them to rethink and improve the areas of the city that we all live in and love.

City Council collaboration

Preliminary conversations with City Council planning officers confirmed not only their support and commitment to the idea of a charrette, but highlighted a number of concerns derived from their perceptions or ongoing policy reviews. Among the issues that the City wished addressed were:

- Gateways and approaches to the city. This echoed our own concern that the main transport arteries into the city were in danger of becoming degraded as environments and that the expanded city will lack a coherent definition if its boundaries are not marked in a meaningful way;
- Local centres. Some of these are in need of reinforcement, redevelopment or revitalizing;
- Tall Buildings. The identification of locations where tall buildings might be acceptable and positive additions to the city's fabric;
- Areas of masterplanning need. Currently fragmented or pressured sites in need of regeneration;
- Green fingers. How these might repeat the success of the city's existing commons and link with them to create a city-wide 'green grid';
- Public spaces. Enhancing places where people congregate during the day and in the evening.

Site selection

Initial discussions within the CAA suggested that sites in Conservation Areas, the urban extension areas* and Cambridge University's West Cambridge site should be excluded. This left a broad, banana-shaped sweep of suburbs north and east of the city centre. It was agreed that, within this area, a range of sites should be considered in preference to a single site. These were intended both to exemplify the general condition of the city's 'in-between' zone and to illuminate its variety – through the particularities and individual characters of each site.

With all of this in mind, over a number of weeks, at meetings and by poring over large-scale maps of the City, jotting down sites as they occurred to us or colleagues, or as we cycled past them, a range of potential sites were identified and marked on our map.

Shortly before the charrette, participating teams were asked to select one of the listed sites. They then had an opportunity to research it before the charrette with a view to developing a vision/strategy and/or making proposals for a specific part or parts of the site. They were free to work at the scale of a bench, a building, a block or a masterplan – or at all four scales!

The final thirteen sites – grouped into five categories – were as follows:

- Edge of the city centre: East Road, the Elizabeth Way roundabout and Mitcham's Corner. All three are located on the ragged margins of the historic core – dominated by 60s/70s traffic engineering. These are generally 'places' that have become 'roads': they need reclaiming for people;

- Corridor - main radial routes: Huntingdon Road, Newmarket Road and Hills Road. These are 'places' that have to negotiate their role as both a main road into the city and an environment for everyday life. Peripheral growth and radial movement will have a significant effect on these – as would the proposals to limit private cars and massively increase bus traffic along these routes;
- Neighbourhood street – local/radials: Histon Road, Mill Road and Cherry Hinton Road. Streets that form a critical part of a local community still largely intact but under threat. Here there are similar issues to the previous category – however these are smaller scale roads with a more local character maintaining a degree of coherence despite growing problems with traffic, low grade redevelopment and the loss of key local shops – the 'Tescopolisation' of the city. These streets should not be confused with roads which are primarily traffic arteries;
- Neighbourhood centre – local centres: Arbury and Abbey. Peripheral post war developments with a low quality public realm and significant areas of underused, unloved, slack space contributing to a poor 'sense of place'. These centres are in need of redevelopment to re-energise the local community and regenerate the area;
- Landscape – green fingers: Hobson's Brook and Coldham's Common. Green spaces that are all-but-countryside but will be under threat as they are enclosed by future development. These existing landscape assets will become critically important linkages and recreation resources as the fringe development sites (Southern fringe, Cambridge East) come into use, their character changing from countryside to suburban or urban parks.

As local residents, the particularity of the selected sites was richly evident to us. Their names are familiar – delineating a mental geography used by residents to navigate the city. Each site, in its own way, defines a portion of the city beyond the historic core. It was our intention to offer a broad range of sites – thus encouraging a strategic consideration of the issues and enabling each practice to define the scope of its study.

Something to build on

As we worked away at identifying these sites, there were perhaps two outcomes that we hoped for. The first and most obvious was that some of the charrette proposals might be further developed and implemented. The second was that the work of looking at our city and identifying opportunities for making it a more liveable, economically successful and attractive place might continue to be developed by the City Council, the Cambridge Preservation Society and local residents' societies. But, above all, by the elephant in the room – the city's highway authority, the County of Cambridge.

8. HILLS ROAD BRIDGE

Purcell Miller Tritton LLP
www.pmt.co.uk

Oliver Caroe
Jaideep Chakrabarti
Alasdair Travers

9. CHERRY HINTON ROAD

Vincent and Goring
www.vincent-goring.co.uk

Mark Chandler
Jonathan Burstow
Andrzej Subocz
Peter Grimmer

10. EAST ROAD ROUNDABOUT

Cowper Griffith Architects
www.cowpergriffith.co.uk

Jeremy Ashworth
Simon Devlin
Lisa Stango
Tim Powter-Robinson

11. HISTON ROAD

Harvey Norman
www.harveynorman.co.uk

Ian Harvey
Andrew Armes
Agave
Paul Dracott

12. COLDHAM'S COMMON NRAP

www.nrap.co.uk

Richard Owers
Nicholas Ray
Jonathan Capek
Aldo Marino, developer
Alan Brigham, historian
Colvin & Moggeridge, Landscape Architects
Martin Bhatia
bdAr Architects
Ben Davidson

[13. MILL ROAD]

Capita Architecture
www.capitasymonds.co.uk

Margherita Cesca
Mallika Bhattacharyya
Lucio Foglia
Sam Goodall
Raffaella Panella

[14. HOBSON'S BROOK]

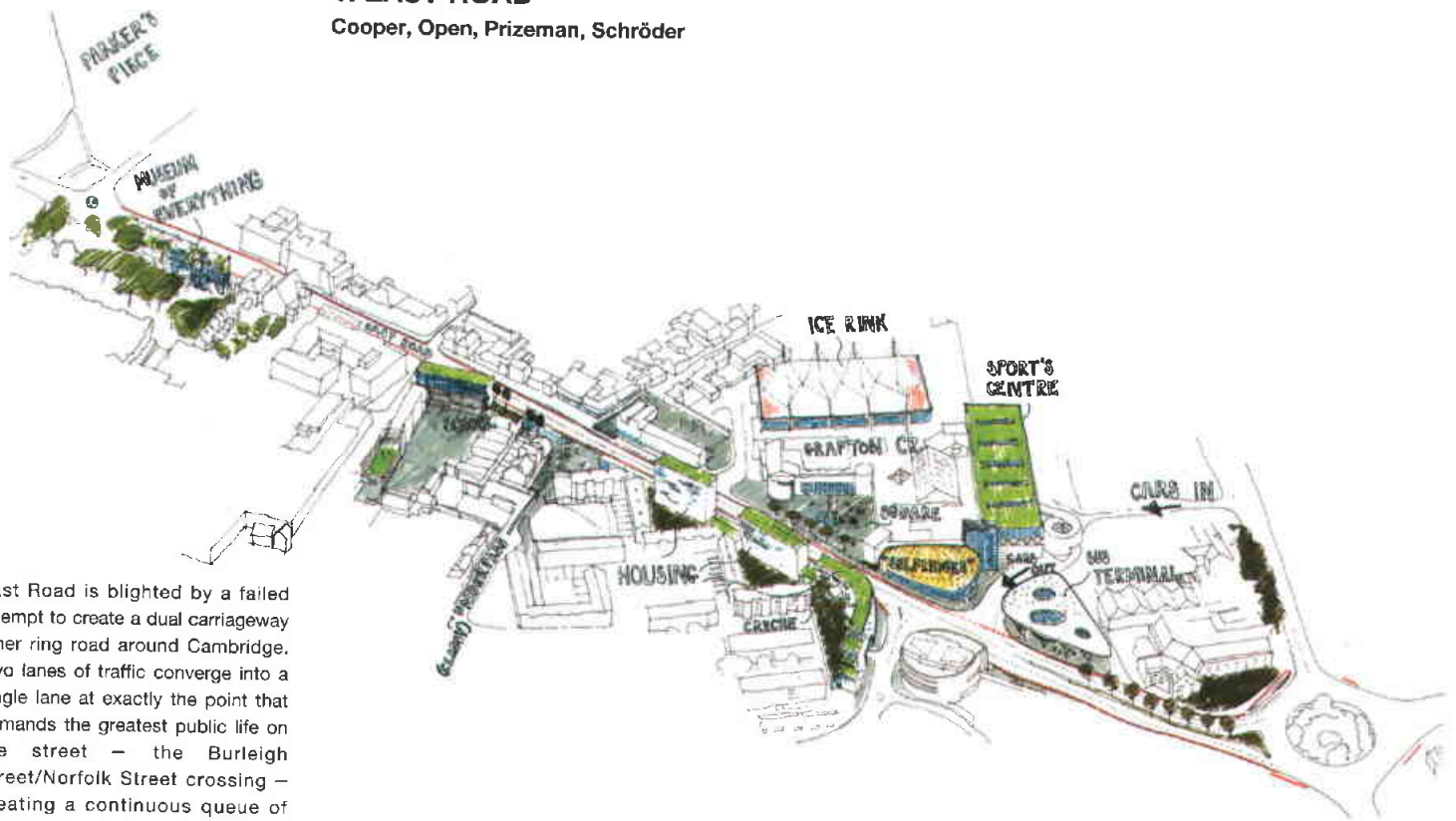
Dennis Goldsmith
dennisgoldsmith@ntlworld.com

Dennis Goldsmith
Chris Surfleet
Russell Long

*Those unfamiliar with the fringe developments will find a complete description of them in our last issue at www.architecture.com/cambridgegazette.

1. EAST ROAD

Cooper, Open, Prizeman, Schröder



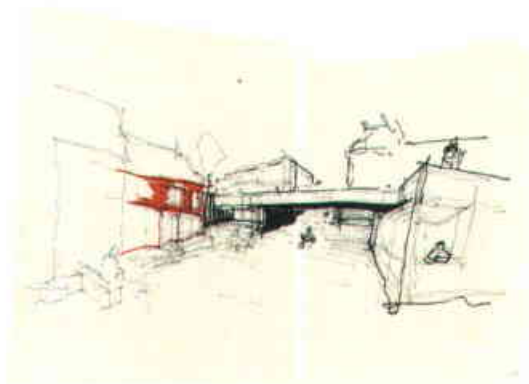
Aerial view of East Road from Petersfield (top left) to the roundabout (lower right) with pedestrian underpass to Burleigh Street (centre)

East Road is blighted by a failed attempt to create a dual carriageway inner ring road around Cambridge. Two lanes of traffic converge into a single lane at exactly the point that demands the greatest public life on the street — the Burleigh Street/Norfolk Street crossing — creating a continuous queue of vehicles backed up to the new Crown Court.

The proposal is simple. Reduce the road to a single lane in each direction between the Crown Court and Parker's Piece, with cycle lanes, and move the Grafton bus terminal to a site opposite the Crown Court.

The impact is dramatic: East Road becomes East Street. The cinema entrance to the Grafton Centre becomes a south-facing public square. Narrowing the carriageway releases land for affordable housing, and new buildings complete the four corners of the Crown Court junction, including the new bus terminal. From Burleigh Street to Norfolk Street, a classy underpass links under the road: WT's snooker hall gives life to this public realm. A new school building fronts onto the street, giving the school a presence in the public arena. And wider pavements allow for a pedestrian life on the street, and for on-street servicing of shops.

But let's not forget the Grafton Centre, whose rooftop car parks command some of the finest views in Cambridge. Build on the roofs and densify. A new sports centre. The long-awaited Cambridge Ice Rink. Finally, bracketing the street at both ends: Cambridge's very own Ponte Vecchio on Elizabeth Way bridge, and a 'Museum of Everything' activating Petersfield.



Norfolk/Burleigh Street underpass ...



... and East Road above



Plan. Note (right) the 'Ponte Vecchio' stalls on the Elizabeth Way bridge

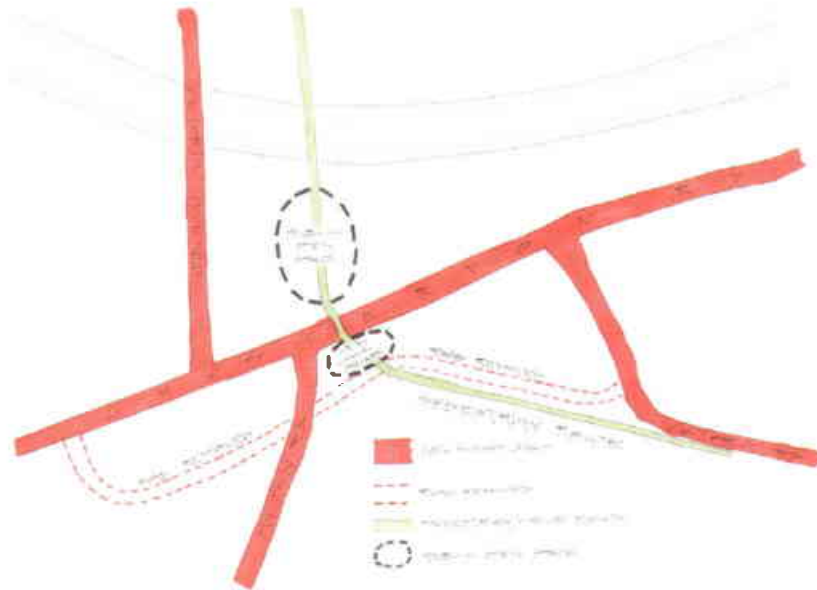
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6-8 Hills Road, Cambridge CB2 1NH T: 01223 368771

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2. MITCHAM'S CORNER

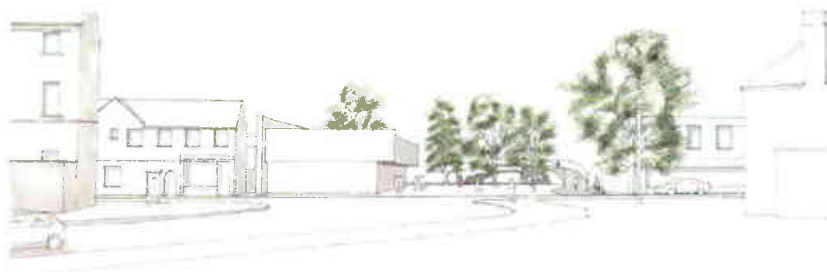
AC Architects Ltd



Mitcham's Corner showing original road pattern reinstated and updated ...



... with new buildings and places to linger in ...



... seen from Milton Road towards the new link over the Cam

AC Architects' offices are only a few yards away from the 1970s highways' nightmare of Mitcham's Corner where, with a single minded determination, the public realm was savaged in the name of traffic flow. The resulting gyratory is a lose-lose situation. It is an uncompromising and uncomfortable place to be whether in a car, on a bike or on foot. It effectively dislocates north Cambridge from the city centre.

It should not be so. It must not be so. It is a local centre with buildings of local interest. It is a crossing point on the Cam, minutes away from the city centre. It's where we work and we care about it.

It could be different. We imagine:

First, the original road pattern updated and reinstated. Victoria Avenue, Milton Road, and Victoria Road each forming their own junction with Chesterton Road. Three sets of traffic lights not five.

Second, the reinstatement of the back gardens to the rear of houses which currently sit on the island created by the gyratory system.

Third, Staples and the Furniture Warehouse sites re-developed with mixed uses, fronting the re-routed highways and creating focal points around a new local 'square' where residents can park whilst going about their daily business.

Fourth, a new pedestrian and cycle bridge linking Victoria Road with Jesus Green, creating a pedestrianised area between Chesterton Road and the river, allowing residents to enjoy the view south across the river.

To achieve a winning situation you need public consensus, a visionary brief for the two development sites, and the relocation of Barclays Bank, in a new focal building overlooking the new square.

As locals we are unashamed CIMBYs; we advocate change in our back yard.

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Januarys
Consultants & Strategists

Arbury Court, a local centre in the heart of Cambridge's northern suburbs, houses useful and vibrant local shops and facilities but nonetheless suffers from degraded building stock, large areas of under-used space and a confused sense of building 'fronts' and 'backs'.

While seemingly a local centre the site actually lies on a fault-line between three city wards and the catchment areas of Manor and Chesterton Community Colleges. Arbury Court – disowned by Arbury – turns towards Kings Hedges. This place that should be most connected to its surroundings marks a dividing line between two communities. Key issues are:

First, neither Arbury Court nor the Community College address Arbury Road so our proposal 'cracks open' the court, with selective demolition and adjustment of the existing buildings, and brings the school to the street – thereby transforming the intermediate ground from a traffic road into a street/square.

Second, the lack of permeability/integration of Arbury and Kings Hedges is addressed through the notion of an Education Landscape. This accessible linear park (on public land) running through the northern suburbs would provide better links between these schools and the communities they serve.

Our proposal supposes an incremental approach. In summary:

Plant – landscape the area between court and college – reclaiming the road as public space, signaling the local centre's presence and structuring short term parking/drop-off (freeing the existing car-park for redevelopment).

Decant – redevelop the school on its existing site but further south than the current buildings to enable a closer relationship with the street and the opening up to the community of the playing fields and key shared facilities in a new sports/hall.

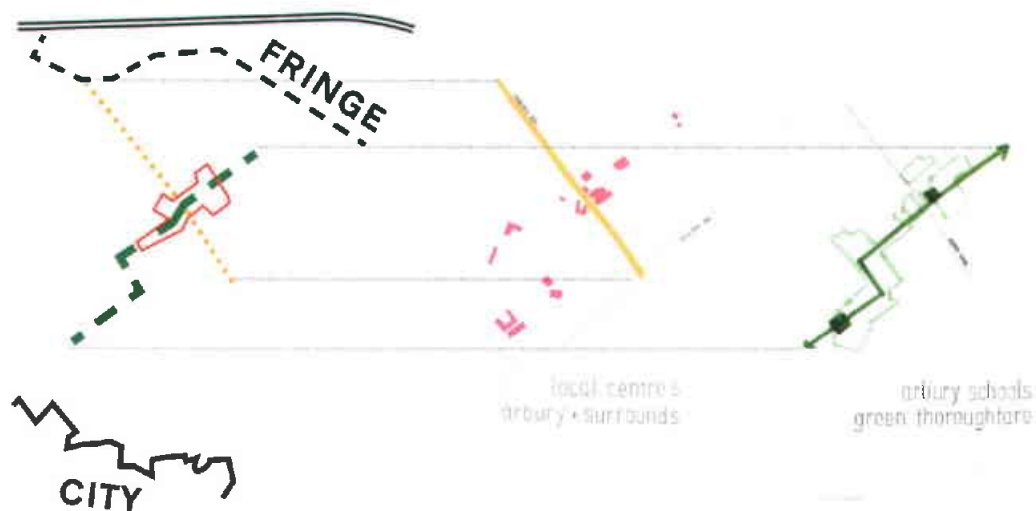
Crack – improve Arbury Court by opening up the court at ground level to provide a sheltered outdoor space and to provide a connection with Arbury Road and the square, rehousing the pub and incorporating new start-up units and workshops.

Connect – provide a continuous, playable, landscape route on publicly owned land.

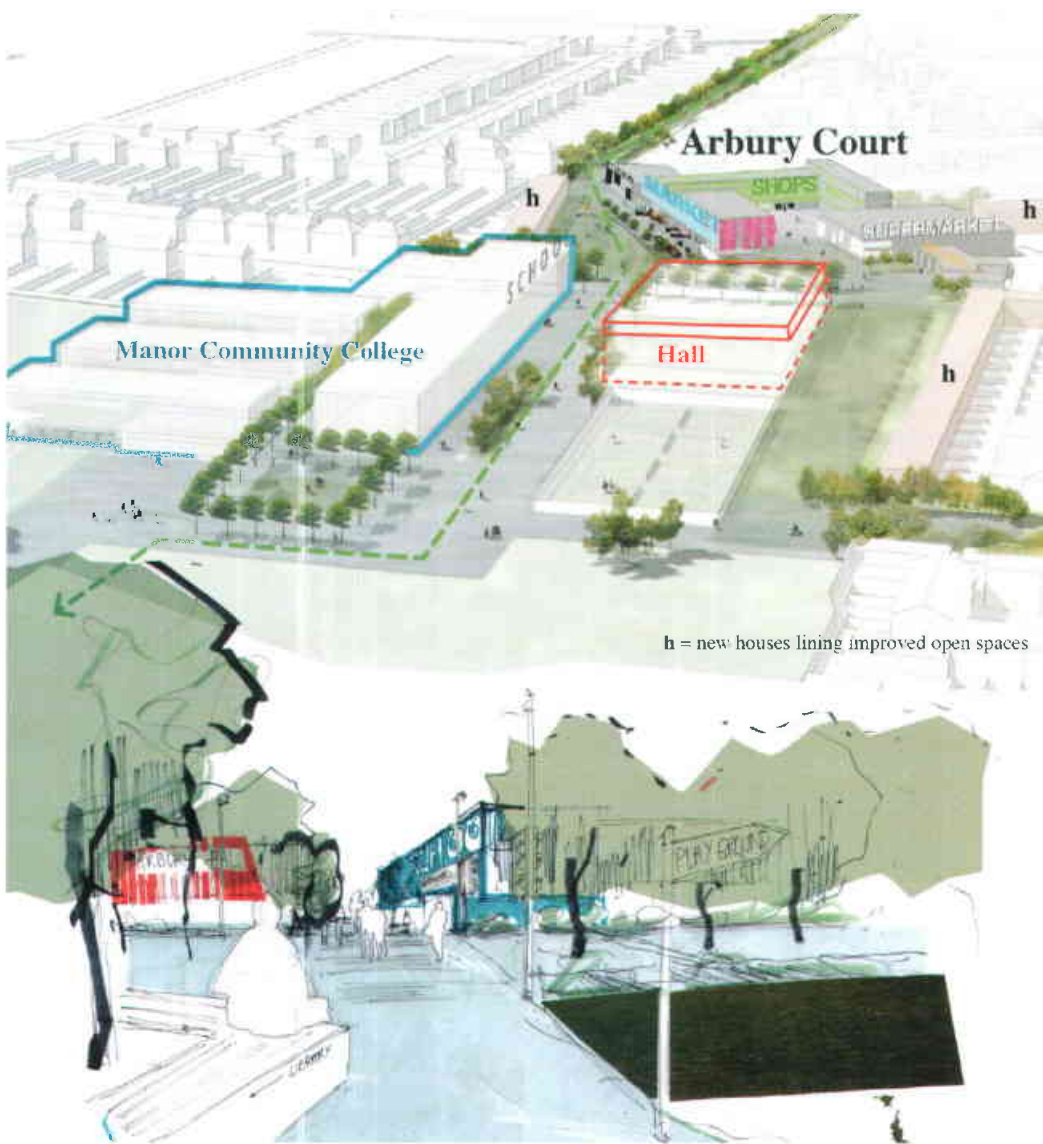
Heal – release sites at the edges of the reformatted open space for residential development – thereby properly framing and enclosing the open space.

3. ARBURY COURT

5th Studio



Diagrammatic summary – Suburban position, fault-line location and potential education spine

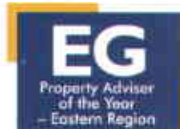


Aerial view (top) and perspective (bottom) showing Arbury Road transformed into a street

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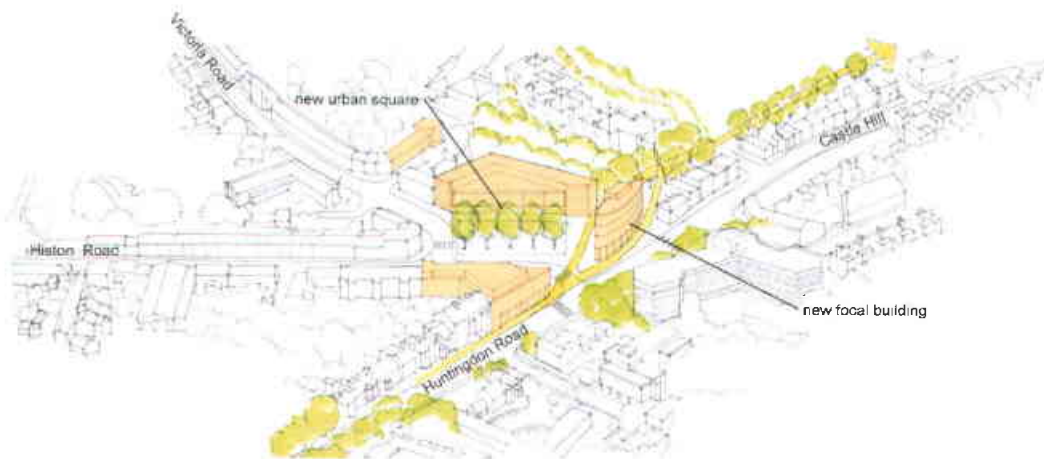
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4. HUNTINGDON ROAD

RH Partnership



Huntingdon Road/Castle Hill plan with a major arts centre on the Shire Hall site



Aerial view of new buildings (orange) and reformed Texaco Corner junction

Our road system is vital to the life of the city but needs to be carefully integrated into the urban fabric and not allowed to dominate the spaces and environment it serves. The current arrangement at the 'Texaco Corner' junction creates an area dominated by vehicles, signs, road barriers. There are no shops, and entrances to buildings are obscure. It is difficult to navigate across the junction as a pedestrian or cyclist and the housing fronts a narrow pavement adjacent to the pollution and noise from the road. The buildings from the 1970's and early 1980's surrounding the junction are undistinguished yet visually dominant.

Our vision is to improve the road network at this junction, adding a new pedestrian route to Castle Mound enhancing this key arrival point on the edge of the city.

The junction is a meeting place of six routes – including our proposed new pedestrian and cycle route down to Castle Mound. We have reordered it to allow Huntingdon Road to remain the primary road, with Histon Road joining it at a T junction. Victoria Road joins Histon Road in a separate T junction. By this arrangement we are able to create a new tree-lined urban square with a new focal building placed as a visual 'stop' to the top end of Histon Road and Victoria Road. This focal building acts as a gateway to the city seen down Huntingdon Road, encouraging cyclists and pedestrians to pass around it along a new route down to Castle Mound.

The redevelopment of the triangular Texaco garage site completes the end of the Histon Road and Huntingdon Road street facades and forms the north side of the new square.

We have let our imagination go one step further and explored what opportunities might be created if the Shire Hall and its offices were relocated to a sustainable alternative location? This is one of the most important historic sites in the city. The plan shows the building footprint of the Lowry Centre from Salford superimposed onto the site currently occupied by Shire Hall. A major arts centre including a concert hall and galleries could be built over the existing underground car park, revitalising the surrounding area and the whole city. The foyers of the building face Castle Mound, with surface car parking removed and new gardens providing an appropriate setting for this major new building.

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Newmarket Road, the main eastern arterial route into Cambridge is lined by a glut of car parks and vast retail warehouses. Cars clog the road, brought to a standstill by continuous junctions and plentiful traffic lights. Newmarket Road is defined by a dramatic contrast in building scales – the Victorian terraced houses and pubs swamped by the huge retail warehouses and swathes of tarmac.

The road not only fails to transport people effectively into the central shopping area, it lacks the sense of arrival that other routes into Cambridge command. It is overtly hostile to pedestrians and cyclists – excluding them, while barely serving the cars and buses. This route has become a barrier to the further growth of the city.

Out-of-town retail developments require easy access by car and should be placed on the well-connected fringes of the city. Our proposal is to replace the residential development planned for the airport site with the large DIY and retail stores and to transfer the housing to the vacated Newmarket Road retail park area. This dense but appropriately scaled new housing will be interspersed with community, commercial and small retail spaces with localized parking. New primary and secondary schools will serve these communities.

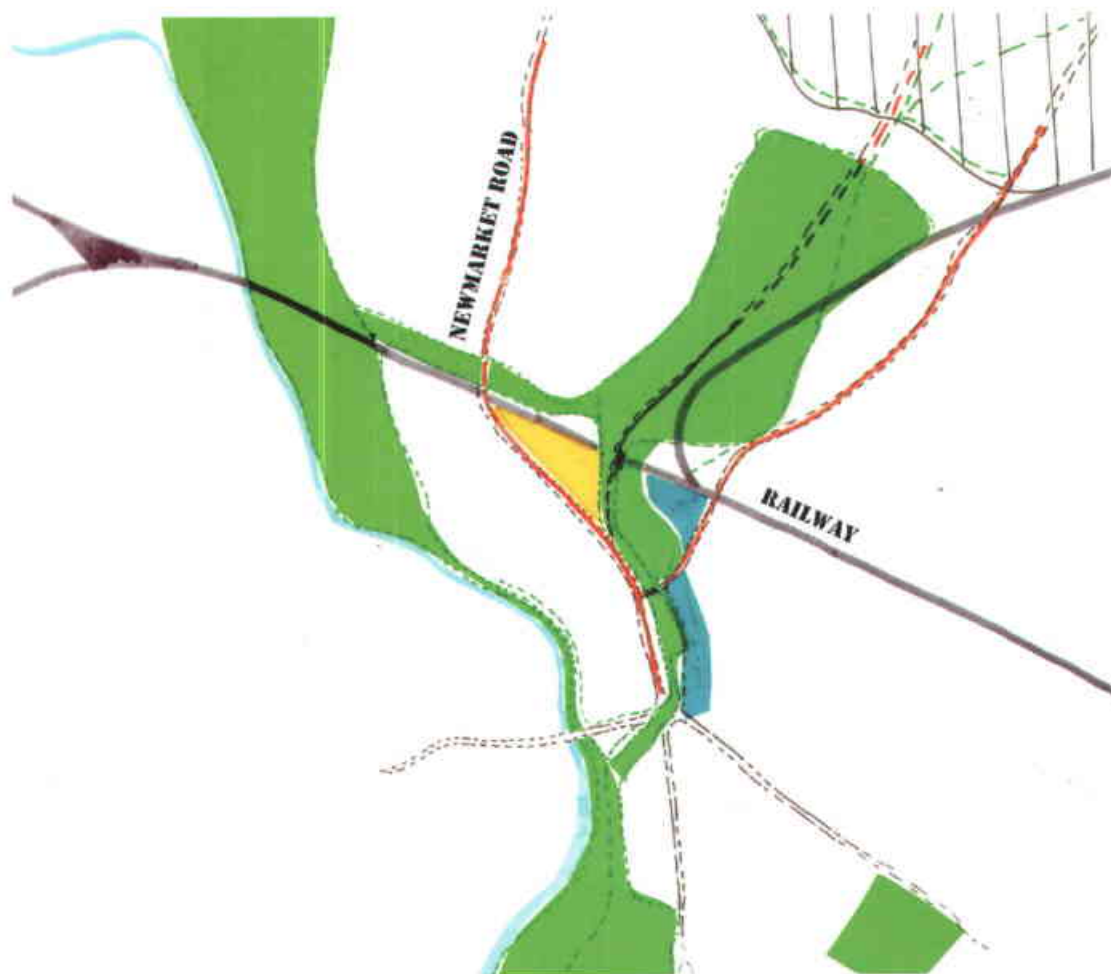
Links to the airport site development will improve with the advent of a new public landscape, reaching into the city as a continuation of Coldham's common. This space will become a green connection between the fringes and the heart of the city, bridging the railway and flowing over the Coldham's Lane junction with Newmarket Road before dropping down towards the River Cam.

Tree planting along Newmarket Road will enable this new city housing to link across the urban highway to the neighbouring Riverside area of Victorian housing and on to Stourbridge and Midsummer Common – large green spaces that surely deserve to be easily accessed rather than hidden behind dense retail developments.

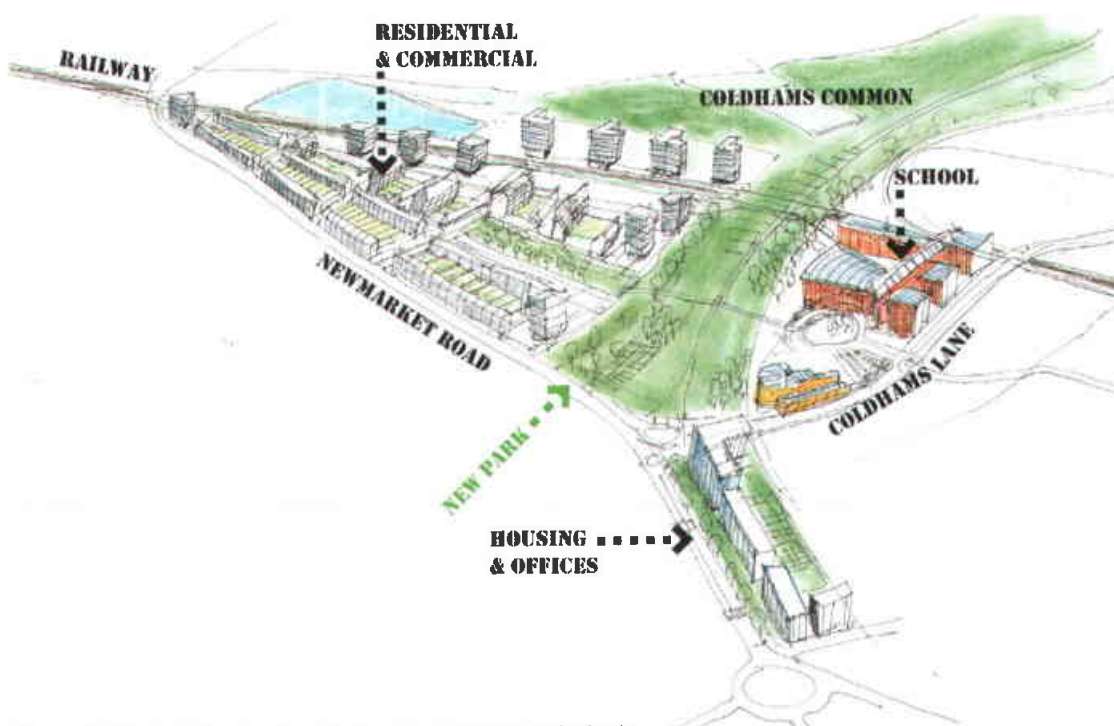
This new streetscape, and its positive connection to the new fringe developments will ensure a vibrant area within the city, at a scale which embraces urbanity. Such sensible, thoughtful planning in the most compact and beautiful of cities will allow people to use, interact and enjoy each space – whether for shopping, commuting, relaxing or dwelling.

5. NEWMARKET ROAD

Mole Architects



Connecting green spaces. River (left), new housing (yellow), airport area (top right)



Newmarket Road retail park replaced by housing, workplaces and schools

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6. ABBEY RMJM Cambridge

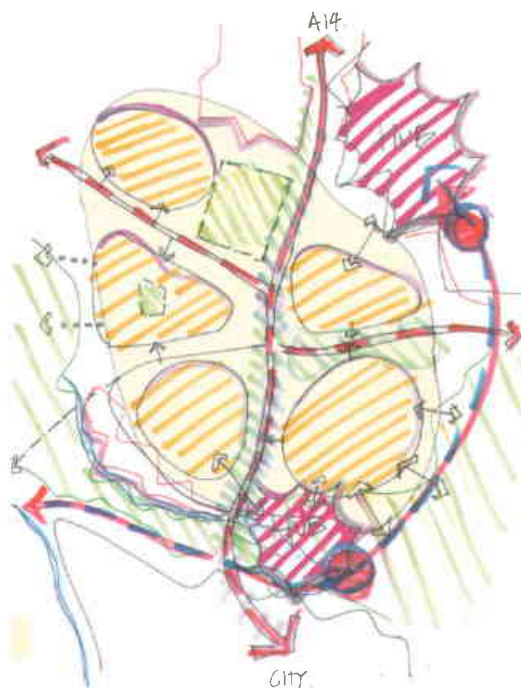
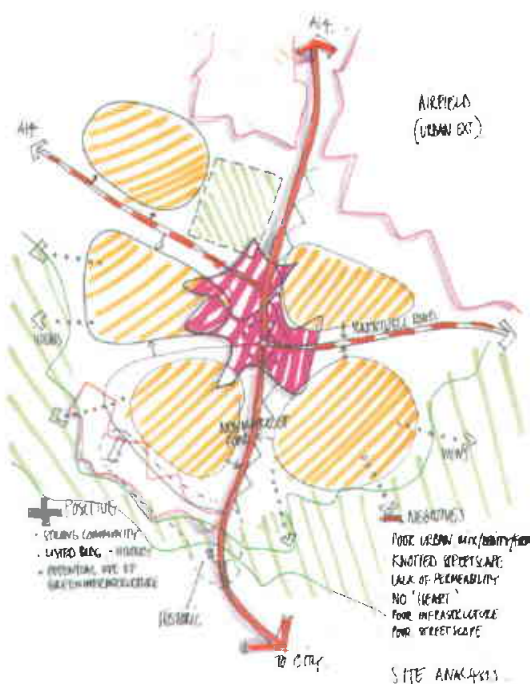
The Abbey area is divided by the existing cruciform road structure into four quadrants containing 'knotted' street structures and dead-ends inhibiting permeability and a sense of connectedness. The amenity and retail area at the Barnwell Road and Newmarket Road roundabout offers no sense of place. Pedestrian and cycle connections to the city centre are poor and unattractive – promoting a sense of isolation.

The proposed redevelopment of Cambridge Airport does not effectively integrate the Abbey area. Our thinking therefore centred on the notion that the Airport redevelopment should 'put its arms around' Abbey. We propose:

First, to relocate the football ground to enable the current site to be redeveloped as a new 'node' of retail, community and other uses.

Second, to use this new 'node' as a natural stepping stone and connector between the river to the north and the airport redevelopment to the east.

Third, to explore the potential to divert north/south traffic along Barnwell Road, as part of the Airport redevelopment. This would enable an increase in housing density and a more appropriate streetscape, and take the pressure off the junction with Newmarket Road.



Plans showing the Abbey isolated ...

... and integrated with the city and airport redevelopment

7. ABBEY Cambridge Preservation Society

Post-war, the Abbey offered dream homes in a desirable location. Today, heavy traffic has given rise to problems for pedestrians. There are inadequate central community and sports facilities and unattractive, uncared-for areas.

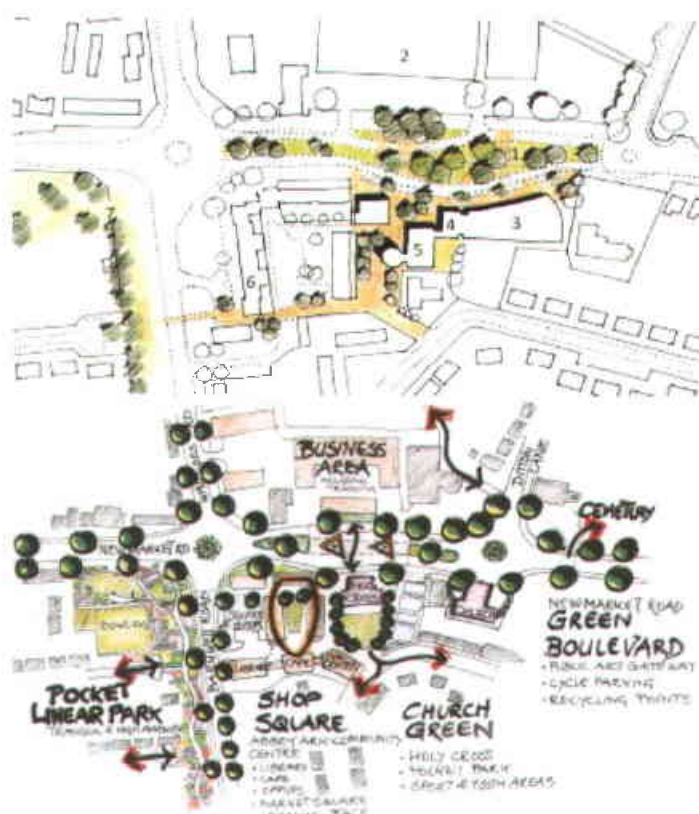
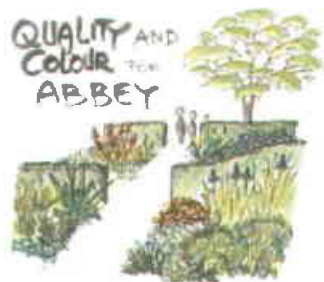
Linking this community together by tunnelling or bridging the main roads is awkward, costly and land hungry. Sustainable design directly benefiting the community is essential – through reutilisation and phased redevelopment.

Newmarket Road would be transformed into a Green Boulevard with a shared pedestrian and vehicle area – restricting speeds between roundabout and traffic lights. Quality design of surfaces and landscape would make it a gateway to Abbey and the City.

A Business Area for employment and training would be linked across Newmarket Road to the Church Square and Green enclosed by the two churches and the 'Abbey Ark' with its community facilities. An upgraded shopping parade and library would enclose the Shop Square with its market / events space. Well-connected and maintained public green spaces would be provided for all age groups.

1. Green Boulevard
2. Business area
3. New Community Building and Youth Club
4. Cafe
5. Church
6. Existing shops
7. Linear and Pocket Parks

PEDESTRIAN ACCESS



Central Abbey – slowing traffic on Newmarket Road, linking the community and enhancing the local centre

Urban Design

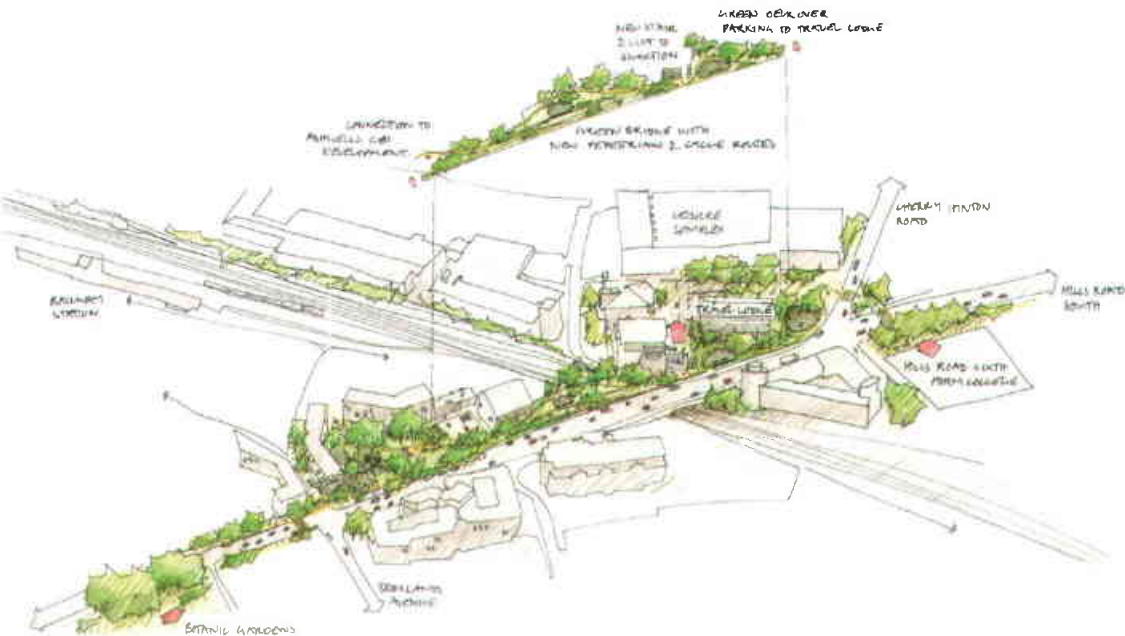
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We propose a chain of linked green public spaces along Hills Road as a focus for, and release from, the intensifying development of the area. The green spaces will link disparate elements of the city and create rich, human places. They could be built, adjusted or simply appropriated. For example, could Hills Road VI Form College and the Botanic Gardens move their railings to create a 5-7m wide band of public green space along the Hills Road frontage? Could we ensure cycle links and pedestrian routes through the area and into the new developments? Could the railway crossing be a positive, enhancing place?

The main focus of our proposal, is for a 'Green Bridge' across the railway. The County Council are already planning this investment, and our suggestion is that, by co-ordinating all the landowners around this area, a legacy could emerge. This is a proposal about linkages and creating a quality of urban experience currently lacking and as yet un-provided for in most recent developments in this area. Our proposal aspires to be more than just a bridge. It would be landscaped for people to enjoy the place as well as the journey.

8.HILLS ROAD BRIDGE Purcell Miller Tritton LLP



Linked green, human spaces. Aerial view of Hills Road bridge and approaches

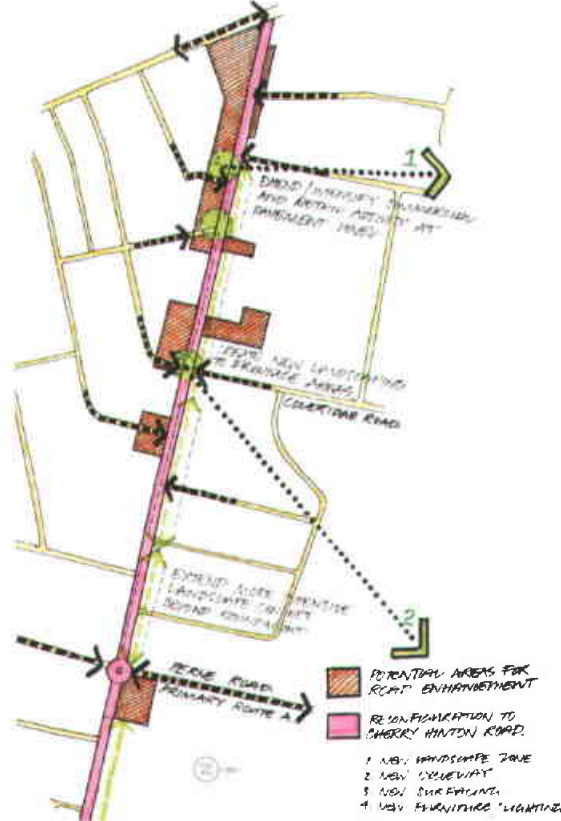
Cherry Hinton Road is a long linear spine road lacking in variety of scale and land use, but providing an important artery into the city centre. We propose:

First, to provide a cycle path to segregate cycles from cars; to plant trees to create a linear landscape zone; to re-pave the footpath to make it more attractive to users; to reorganise the street furniture to make it more appropriate and less intrusive; and to rationalise on-street parking areas.

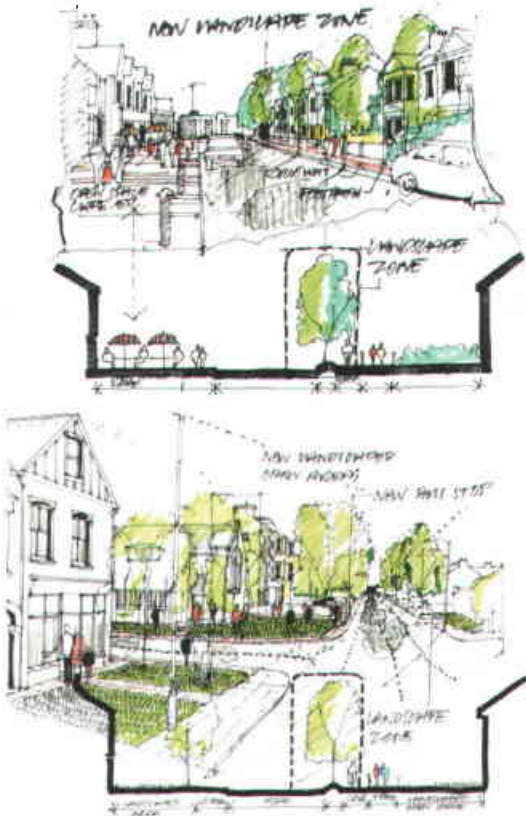
Second, to improve the strips of shops and so on to create centres of activity connecting back to the residential hinterland. This would be done by encouraging side-walk activities such as cafés and specialist shops with related pockets of short-stay parking; by pedestrian crossings to slow traffic at focal points; and by widening vistas with enhanced landscaping.

Third, to implement, through local consensus, a policy for the general improvement of the road zone boundaries by restricting new street boundary enclosures and driveways to a prescribed palette of materials; by a controlled colour palette for building redecoration; and by siting bus stops away from residential properties.

9. CHERRY HINTON ROAD Vincent and Goring



Part plan of Cherry Hinton Road (left) identifying centres of activity with typical sections (right) showing enhanced landscaping



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10. HISTON ROAD

Harvey Norman Architects



Aerial view view (top) showing the polycentre straddling Histon Road. Key, lower left, plan, right.

Like new skins on an onion, different periods of development line Histon Road. Into these layers poorly designed post WW2 commercial and residential infill has been inserted. This infill is suffocating the area and, with the traffic, creating an unpleasant environment.

There are echoes of a gentler past, particularly in the cemetery and the hidden recreation ground serving the very pleasant Victorian terraced streets behind Histon Rd and the 1930s 'Homes for Heroes' semi-detached areas to the north. However, these are disconnected both from each other and from any articulated centre. But there are some vibrant shops, a busy school and a community centre.

Our proposal is to clear away the low quality infill and to exploit the existing assets such as the recreation ground in order to create a new sustainable 'poly centre'. This would be fronted by a mix of retail and civic buildings including a redeveloped primary school and community centre which will give a visual coherence and sense of place.

It is anticipated that the release of land for the new housing and business centre would help fund this proposal.

11. EAST ROAD ROUNDABOUT

Cowper Griffith Architects



Vertical urban farm – a functional landmark growing crops and housing small livestock above the East Road roundabout

The East Road roundabout is an inaccessible and unwelcoming place at the confluence of two major arteries into Cambridge.

Within the centre of the roundabout, we propose a functional landmark symbolizing contemporary Cambridge. The Cambridge Urban Farm would be a vertical, translucent armature, rising several stories, with crops of all kinds and small livestock in a controlled environment. It would be the hub for a movement to create a more sustainable city.

We would improve the space in the roundabout area by widening the entrances into the central space and making them more welcoming. The lowered ground level would house cafés and a market for locally produced food and education centres for a greener way of life.

Finally, we would ask the City to ensure that future city planting schemes would be of edible varieties, fruit trees, herbs and vegetables – freely available for residents to enjoy.

Our proposal would act as a catalyst for a more sustainable urban environment, encouraging good health, creating new employment opportunities and making use of abandoned land and buildings.

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A proposal for the enhancement of this important open space, which, with the development of the Cambridge Airport site, will become a central urban park rather than an under-appreciated peripheral space.

It can continue to support a nature reserve, allotment gardens and sports of many kinds, but paths across it will also create important north-south links from the River Cam and the Leper Chapel, beneath Newmarket Road, and over Barnwell Road to the open space in the new housing area, as well as connecting to Barnwell itself.

A new road fringing the west of the common provides the opportunity to resolve the awkward connection with Coldham's Lane and make new buildings that front the park, while the Norwich branch line is part buried to unify the space.

The thinking behind this proposal is explained on the opposite page.

12. COLDHAM'S COMMON

NRAP Architects



From common to urban park with building fronts and backs (in red) defining its edges



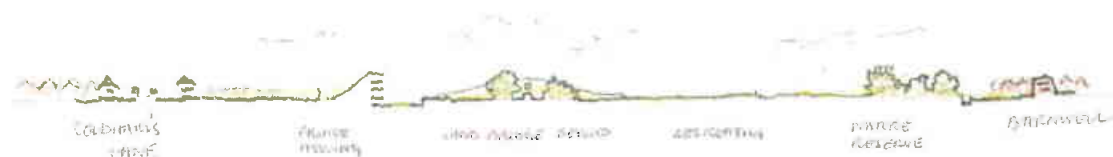
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Section from west (Coldham's Lane) to east (Barnwell) across the park

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PLACE-MAKING

TOWNSCAPE AS LANDSCAPE

This essay is based on a contribution by Nicholas Ray of NRAP to a seminar on The Future Landscape of Cambridge, held in Magdalene College, following the CAA charrette in which his team developed the proposal for Coldham's Common (opposite).

MAKING PEOPLE-FRIENDLY TOWNS

Improving the public environment in towns and cities



Cover of Francis Tibbalds' book, Cambridge courts top right.

A future scenario which took issues of sustainability very seriously might see the real debate about the future landscape of Cambridge as being between those who believe that the fields and commons should be occupied by wind farms to generate electricity in a sustainable manner, and those who say that the land is too precious for that, and we should be using our fenland soil to grow vegetables as close to the centre of the population as possible. But I am focusing here on a more abstract and architectural issue, one that is still highly relevant and that has as much to do with townscape as landscape.

About sixty years ago, the editor of the *Architectural Review*, Hubert de Cronin Hastings, enlisted the help of the émigré architectural historian, Nikolaus Pevsner, in a campaign for humanising modern architecture in England, by concentrating on an aspect of picturesque composition that was thought to be quintessentially English: 'Townscape' was born, and was energetically illustrated by Gordon Cullen and Kenneth Browne¹. One of its fundamental tenets was that the space between buildings had to be considered positively – not as something left over after the planning of roads and structures. Unsurprisingly, the quads in Oxford and the courts in Cambridge score highly – the buildings hold hands, as it were, to make coherent spaces. For this reason Francis Tibbalds' book *Making People-friendly Towns*, originally published in 1992², illustrated part of the plan of central Cambridge on its front cover. Along with exciting silhouettes, rich textural contrasts and the skilful handling of sequences of light and shade, creating positive space, says Tibbalds, will render towns more 'people-friendly'.

Making sense of open space

Twenty-five years ago, my practice was lucky enough to be appointed by Magdalene College to help them develop a site on the banks of the River Cam for commercial purposes. We treated the office building as a backdrop to the space, and tried to ensure that Quayside remained the name of the space created, not the name of a building. Some years later we did a study for the Cambridge campus of APU, now Anglia Ruskin University, and there we tried to persuade our clients to stop naming the buildings and to name the spaces they enclose, because even that shift of nomenclature could change attitudes.

It seems architects need to be continually reminded of this simple lesson. In the 1970's Leon Krier, later to be Prince Charles's masterplanner at Poundbury, had illustrated the problem of iconic modern buildings that were conceived of as objects in a compelling little diagram (incidentally showing what I take to be a version of the Cambridge History Faculty in the top left corner). But we only have to look at a couple of examples of what is currently being proposed by western architects in Beijing to see the continuing fascination of the iconic building, or cluster of buildings, that fail to create space of any coherence. Architects in Cambridge are also aware that the research by Leslie Martin in the 1960s, showed that object buildings tended to be less efficient spatially than buildings that surrounded and make sense of their open space³.

Martin's perception makes sense at all scales, as he was well aware. The CAA charrette offered an opportunity to examine an example. We looked at an area nearly the size of Regent's Park – Coldham's Common. At the moment it is seen as a kind of wilderness, trapped between the suburban development of the Abbey Ward and the equally low-density fringe of Romsey Town. That secret wilderness has many qualities, and we invited on to our team Allan Brigham, a man who knows more about Cambridge and its open spaces than most. He is fearful of what developers and their architects might do to such a precious resource for the city. But if and when the Cambridge Airport site is developed, the centre of gravity of Cambridge as a whole will shift: Coldham's Common will need to be treated positively, and it does no harm to consider now how to do that.

Lesson from Regent's Park

It's dangerous to make proposals in a vacuum, but the history of Regent's Park itself is instructive. It could not continue as dairy farmland. The speculative venture masterminded by Nash was not entirely successful, since only a portion of the villas and terraces was constructed, but the multifarious uses that Regent's Park now supports, as well as the principle that the terraces front the park, rather than turning their backs on it, surely have lessons for us. Allotments and kite flying, fishing, running, ball games and nature trails can all have their place, but that should not be incompatible with careful development that increases connections and offers enhanced opportunities for public access and enjoyment. By considering Coldham's Common together with the open space provision in the Airport site there need be no quantitative loss of open space and, qualitatively, it could be treated as a positive asset rather than a neglected area. A precedent that is nearer to hand, The Backs, has been positively considered since the eighteenth century – but the publicly accessible space there is very limited indeed compared to Coldham's Common⁴.

It is all too easy for architects to have bold ideas and bemoan the fact that they fail to be realised, and there is nothing as political as the redesign of spaces that people use and overlook. The Prince Regent could employ Nash to do his will, but in a democracy many different interest groups and stakeholders need to be brought on board before visions of any scale can be realised. I have suggested that simple townscape principles, which can be applied to the consideration of buildings and spaces, also need to be adopted in relation to open space and areas of settlement – and if this is an effective way to begin to imagine the future landscape of Cambridge, the necessary political means to achieve those improvements should be found.



Les bâtiments ne forment pas un espace descriptible. L'espace public est accidenté.

The buildings do not form a describable space, the public space is accidental.

Krier's lesson, History Faculty top left



Exemplar: Regent's park and street

1. The formative article is by Hastings, adopting the pseudonym Ivor de Wolfe: *The Architectural Review* 106, 1949, 'Townscape: A plea for an English Visual Philosophy founded on the true rock of Sir Uvedale Price'.
2. Tibbalds, F, *Making People-Friendly Towns: Improving the Public Environment in Towns and Cities*, London, Longman Group Ltd, 1992; paperback edition Spon / Taylor & Francis, 2000.
3. The findings were summarised in Martin, L and March, L, *Urban Space and Structures*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1970
4. For a thought-provoking analysis of picturesque planning, see Macarthur, J, *The Picturesque: Architecture, disgust and other irregularities*, London and New York, Routledge / Taylor & Francis, 2007.

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Cover: East Road becomes East Street – a fragment of the Cooper Open Prizeman Schröder scheme for humanising Cambridge's aborted city motorway (see p. 6)

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